

**UNCLASSIFIED**

---

---

**AD 401 340**

*Reproduced  
by the*

**ARMED SERVICES TECHNICAL INFORMATION AGENCY  
ARLINGTON HALL STATION  
ARLINGTON 12, VIRGINIA**



---

---

**UNCLASSIFIED**

NOTICE: When government or other drawings, specifications or other data are used for any purpose other than in connection with a definitely related government procurement operation, the U. S. Government thereby incurs no responsibility, nor any obligation whatsoever; and the fact that the Government may have formulated, furnished, or in any way supplied the said drawings, specifications, or other data is not to be regarded by implication or otherwise as in any manner licensing the holder or any other person or corporation, or conveying any rights or permission to manufacture, use or sell any patented invention that may in any way be related thereto.

CATALOGED BY ASTIA  
AS AD NO. 401340

4 . 01 340

COMMUNIST CHINA AND NUCLEAR FORCE

Alice Langley Hsieh

March 1963

ASTIA  
AF 10 1963

P-2719

Copyright © 1963  
THE RAND CORPORATION

NO 010

COMMUNIST CHINA AND NUCLEAR FORCE<sup>\*</sup>

Alice Langley Hsieh<sup>1</sup>

The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California

Communist China's intention to develop its own capability for producing nuclear weapons, rather than merely to turn out one or two bombs for symbolic purposes, is no longer at issue. Probably as early as 1954-55 the Chinese, with some Soviet technical assistance, began working toward creating the scientific and technological basis for their own nuclear weapons production program. Since 1958 they have made no secret of their intention to develop their own nuclear weapons and to master rocket technology. In May of that year Commander of the Air Force Liu Ya-lou wrote: "China's working class and scientists will certainly be able to make the most up-to-date aircraft and atomic bombs in the not distant future.... By that time... we can use atomic weapons and guided missiles...in coping

---

\* Any views expressed in this paper are those of the author. They should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of The RAND Corporation or the official opinion or policy of any of its governmental or private research sponsors. Papers are reproduced by The RAND Corporation as a courtesy to members of its staff.

<sup>1</sup> To M. G. Weiner, L. Gouré, S. T. Hosmer, B. F. Jaeger, P. F. Langer, and Col. R. L. Blachly, the author wishes to acknowledge her indebtedness for assistance in formulating many of the concepts presented in this paper.

with the enemies who dare to invade our country...."<sup>2</sup> In October 1961, Field Marshal the Viscount Montgomery reported Chou En-lai as saying "that the Government had decided to proceed with plans for developing nuclear weapons for the armed forces."<sup>3</sup> In the summer of 1962, Foreign Minister Chen Yi, in an interview broadcast by the Swiss Monte Ceneri radio station, was reported as saying that China was working to develop an atom bomb of its own.<sup>4</sup> Again, in September 1962, he was reported to have told a group of Japanese correspondents that a "large organization" was engaged in research on nuclear weapons<sup>5</sup> and that "so long as there are nuclear powers, we shall try to possess nuclear weapons."<sup>6</sup>

The date of the first Chinese nuclear detonation, however, remains an open question. In contrast to earlier public predictions that this might well occur in the 1961-63 period, recently published estimates appear to favor a date between 1963 and 1965.<sup>7</sup> In any event it is not impossible

---

<sup>2</sup> Liu Ya-lou, "Seriously Study Mao Tse-tung's Military Thinking," Chieh-fang Chün Pao (Liberation Army Newspaper), May 23, 1958.

<sup>3</sup> Field Marshal the Viscount Montgomery, "China on the Move," Sunday Times (London), October 15, 1961.

<sup>4</sup> Frankfurter Rundschau, Frankfurt, August 6, 1962.

<sup>5</sup> Yomiuri, Tokyo, September 20, 1962.

<sup>6</sup> Mainichi, Tokyo, November 10, 1962. See also Yomiuri and Nihon Keizai, Tokyo, November 10, 1962.

<sup>7</sup> New York Times, January 21, 1963, reported Admiral Harry D. Felt as saying that the Chinese Communists could be expected to explode a nuclear device "within a year or two." Christian Science Monitor, December 24, 1962, reported McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, as indicating that according to "our best information" no non-nuclear government has moved "strongly in this direction of weapons development in the past two years."

that within a few years after achieving a detonation Peking may possess a modest nuclear capability. Two factors may already have affected the rate of development of China's nuclear weapons program: the deterioration in China's economic situation since 1959 and the withdrawal of Soviet technicians in mid-1960, presumably including those attached to China's nuclear program. It is difficult, however, to determine the impact of either of these developments. China's nuclear weapons program conceivably is immune from the more general economic crisis throughout the country. As to the effect of the withdrawal of Soviet technicians, it is quite possible that by 1961 the Chinese program had developed a momentum of its own and that Soviet assistance, the extent of which has never been clear, was no longer an important factor. Nevertheless, recent Chinese statements have not repeated Liu Ya-lou's 1958 "not-distant-future" prediction; rather, a more "bearish" tendency is evident. For example, in October 1961, Lord Montgomery reported Chou En-lai as saying that the development of nuclear weapons was not being given such a high priority since there was so much else to do.<sup>8</sup> In mid-1962, Chen Yi was reported as conceding that the development of an atom bomb still required a lot of time;<sup>9</sup> in November, as admitting that "our research in the atomic energy field is backward."<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Field Marshal the Viscount Montgomery, "China on the Move," Sunday Times (London), October 15, 1961.

<sup>9</sup> Frankfurter Rundschau, Frankfurt, August 6, 1962.

<sup>10</sup> Yomiuri, Tokyo, November 10, 1962.

However important the precise date at which China enters the nuclear club, the more challenging problem is the way in which China will choose to exploit its first nuclear detonation and its progressive acquisition of a modest nuclear delivery capability. While there are many analyses of British and French nuclear developments, little careful attention has been given so far to the motivations underlying China's decision to develop its own nuclear weapons or to the advantages (or disadvantages) likely to accrue to Peking thereby. On this score the Chinese have been more reticent<sup>11</sup> than some of their Western interpreters, who have suggested a range of possible Chinese actions at the time China possesses even a limited nuclear capability. One school of thought contends that since the Chinese do not understand the implications of nuclear war, do not fear a nuclear war and are prepared to withstand the loss of 200 to 400,000,000 people, they will be inclined to use their nuclear weapons recklessly against Asian countries and U.S. forces in the area. Others suggest that the Chinese plan to instigate a war between the United States and the Soviet Union (the catalytic war theme) during which they will sit on the side lines and reap the

---

<sup>11</sup> The Liu Ya-lou statement briefly referred to an ability to "cope with the enemies who dare to invade our country," to "another new turning point" in the international situation, and to the "revolutionary movements in the world in general and Asia in particular" as advancing "with more vigorous steps." The more recent Chinese statements already referred to have simply suggested that, because other countries have nuclear weapons, China must have them too; that the capitalists would consider China as underdeveloped and defenseless as long as it lacked the ultimate weapons; and that the spread of nuclear weapons is more likely to lead to agreements for general disarmament.

benefits. Others see China's nuclear capability as giving Peking increased leverage on Moscow. Still others suggest that once Peking has nuclear weapons it will be able to deter the United States from responding to Chinese aggressive moves inasmuch as its nuclear capability will more or less cancel out the U.S. nuclear capability in the area, thus enhancing its freedom to initiate large-scale conventional wars in the Far East.

To what extent are judgments of this nature valid? An answer requires not only a careful attempt to project Chinese behavior as China moves toward the acquisition of a nuclear capability but also, and more important, some consideration of the factors that are likely to condition Chinese actions at that time.

FACTORS LIKELY TO AFFECT PEKING'S EXPLOITATION OF ITS  
NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENTS

Objectives and Techniques

Analysis of Communist China's foreign and military policies of the past twelve years clearly shows that, despite important shifts in the strategy and tactics implementing these policies, certain basic objectives constantly characterize the Communist Chinese world outlook. Barring an extreme reorientation in Chinese leadership, the following objectives are likely to remain essentially unchanged for the next decade.

A major objective is the achievement of great power status and recognition of Peking as the sole voice of China in world councils. Another major Chinese objective

is the achievement of hegemony in Asia -- incorporation of Taiwan into Peking's domain and the extension of Chinese influence to South and Southeast Asia and to Japan and Korea. However, the degree to which the Chinese can hope to achieve this objective is largely dependent on the extent to which U.S. power and influence can be removed from the area. Thus Peking is likely to seek to erode the U.S. base-alliance system in the Far East, eliminate U.S. security and military assistance arrangements, neutralize U.S. allies, and limit U.S. access to the area. A third major Chinese objective is the acceleration of the world Communist revolution and the enhancement of Peking's role therein. China increasingly can be expected to try to draw the Communist parties of Asia, Africa, and Latin America into her sphere of influence. At the same time she will continue to attempt to enhance her bargaining power with the Soviet Union and to gain a greater voice in bloc decisions regarding international strategy, formulation of doctrine, and the use and disposition of the bloc's military power.

In the past, China has used a range of techniques -- political, psychological, economic, cultural, and military -- in pursuing her objectives. These techniques continue to have utility for Peking, but without nuclear weapons of her own or assurance of Soviet backing, China is limited in the military means available to further her objectives in the Far East. This restriction, however, is temporary. As she enhances her military strength, particularly when she detonates a nuclear device and moves progressively toward acquiring a nuclear capability,

she can be expected to use this added power either directly or indirectly in the interest of her basic objectives. Thus it is necessary to ask what is the role of force in Chinese military doctrine and to what extent the Chinese understand the full implications of nuclear war.

#### Chinese Military Doctrine

Role of Force in Traditional Strategy. China's traditional military strategy, as reflected in the writings of Mao Tse-tung, evolved pragmatically in response to concrete problems and experience. Mao's view of war is both complex and different in important aspects from the traditional Western military view. True, he did not hesitate to describe war as "the highest form of struggle between nations, states, classes, or political groups."<sup>12</sup> Nor was he reluctant to assert that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."<sup>13</sup> He also cited Lenin's rendering of Clausewitz to the effect that "war is simply the continuation of politics by other...means."<sup>14</sup>

But to Mao, war was more than the application of force when political means had failed. Because of the vast inferiority of Chinese Communist military equipment and skilled manpower to those of the main enemy, be it the Kuomintang or Japanese, Mao developed a view of war as a protracted struggle that relied heavily on the use

---

<sup>12</sup> Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of China's Revolutionary War," Selected Works, New York, International Publishers, 1954, Vol. II, p. 187.

<sup>13</sup> Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of War and Strategy," Selected Works, New York ed., Vol. II, p. 272.

<sup>14</sup> Mao Tse-tung, "On the Protracted War," Selected Works, New York ed., Vol. II, p. 202.

of political, psychological, economic, and diplomatic techniques, in addition to purely military means. As he wrote in "On the Protracted War," "war is politics," "war itself is a political action," "war cannot for a single moment be separated from politics," "any tendency...to belittle politics, to isolate war from politics, and to become advocates of 'war is everything,' is erroneous and must be corrected."<sup>15</sup>

Mao also questioned the theory that "weapons mean everything," which he described as "a mechanist [sic] theory of war." According to Mao: "Weapons are an important factor in war but not the decisive one; it is man and not material that counts."<sup>16</sup>

War being a political action, the use of force was viewed by Mao not necessarily as a last resort when political measures had failed, but as one of several instruments of policy operating within a broad political context, an instrument that was operative at any point and time in the struggle. Force was to be used in relation to the political objective and within the framework of the political-military balance. On the one hand, it was not to be used alone in the adventurist sense but as a backup for political, psychological, and other nonmilitary actions. On the other hand, however, when the political situation favored or required it, when opportunities existed, or when the expectation of success was high, the use of force might well be invoked.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

The key to Mao's military thinking lies in the primacy he grants to the political element. What he did was to establish an integrated doctrine whereby a weak force could hope to succeed against a militarily stronger enemy. It was no accident that in 1936 Mao wrote: "Our strategy is 'to pit one against ten,' while our tactic is 'to pit ten against one.'"<sup>17</sup> By 1948 this formula was translated into his famous dictum of "strategically despise, tactically respect" the enemy.<sup>18</sup> By this Mao meant that the trend of historical development was with the forces of socialism even though the strength of the capitalist or imperialist enemy might have to be acknowledged in specific situations. In effect, this was a reaffirmation of the premise that force was an instrument to be used cautiously and rationally, depending on the political-military balance.

The top military leaders of present-day China have been schooled in these principles and are experienced in their successful application. Mao's military writings are still studied in China today, not so much because of the tactics, deceptions, and ruses they espouse, but because they throw light on the continuing Chinese problem: how to make political gains from a position of military inferiority.<sup>19</sup> The question that must be raised,

---

<sup>17</sup> Mao Tse-tung, "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War," Selected Works, New York ed., Vol. I, p. 239.

<sup>18</sup> Mao Tse-tung, "On Some Important Problems of the Party's Present Policy," Selected Works, Vol. IV, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1961, p. 181.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Lai Ch'un-feng, "Learn from Chairman Mao's Military Writings; Learn from Modern Military

however, is: what is the role of this type of strategy in the context of the nuclear era and in relation to China's assessment of the role of nuclear power?

#### IMPACT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON CHINESE MILITARY THINKING

Except for a brief period in 1955, Chinese public statements have in principle disparaged the impact of nuclear weapons on modern military operations and strategic concepts. This has been particularly true since 1958 when (no doubt in response to Moscow's refusal to make nuclear weapons available to Peking) the study of Mao's military writings was revived, the "paper tiger" theme reasserted, the "man-over-weapons" thesis reiterated, the purely military viewpoint criticized, and those persons who "one-sidedly stressed the part of atomic weapons and modern military techniques" condemned. As differences between the Soviet Union and China became more open after mid-1959, the question of "war" became one of the major issues in the public exchange. Not only did the Chinese argue that war was inevitable (particularly local wars instigated by U.S. imperialism), but they insisted that nuclear war would not result in the annihilation of mankind, only of capitalism. "On the debris of a dead imperialism, the victorious people would create with extreme rapidity a civilization thousands of times higher than the capitalist system and a truly beautiful future for themselves."<sup>20</sup> The

---

Science," Chieh-fang-chun Pao, March 16, 1958, in the U.S. Joint Publications Research Service, No. 1687-N, "Military Information from Chieh-fang-chun Pao" (The Liberation Army Newspaper), pp. 7-11.

<sup>20</sup> "Long Live Leninism!" Hung Ch'i editorial, April 19, 1960.

Chinese also took the line that war was not to be feared.<sup>21</sup> These assertions, made in the course of the Lenin anniversary polemics in April 1960, contrasted sharply with Soviet insistence that war was not fatalistically inevitable and came at a time when Khrushchev had made one of his closest approaches to the Malenkov destruction-of-civilization heresy.

In June of the same year, General Li Cheh-min argued that "modern revisionists, frightened out of their wits by the imperialist blackmail of nuclear war, exaggerated the consequences of the destructiveness of nuclear war and begged imperialism for peace at any cost, in fact, playing the role of helping the imperialists undermine the militant spirit of the people."<sup>22</sup> In October, General Fu Chung, Deputy Director of the PLA's Political Work Department, wrote: "The issue of a future war will not be decided by guided missiles or atom bombs. It will still be decided by man. Atom bombs will never be able to destroy mankind or the world.... The revolutionary people are always able to find ways and means for overcoming every kind of modern weapon."<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, this article followed closely upon one by the Soviet military

---

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Yu Chao-li, "Imperialism is the Source of War in Modern Times and the Way for the People of All Countries to Struggle for Peace," Hung Ch'i, April 1, 1960.

<sup>22</sup> Li Cheh-min, "Resolute Struggles Must Be Carried Out Against U.S. Imperialism," Jen-min Jih-pao (hereafter referred to as JMJP), June 25, 1960.

<sup>23</sup> Fu Chung, "Great Victories for Mao Tse-tung's Military Dialectics," JMJP, October 6-7, 1960.

theoretician, Major General Talenskii, in which he noted the probability of extensive destruction on both sides no matter which got in the first strike.<sup>24</sup>

Chinese statements belittling the consequences of nuclear war have been widely accepted as implying that the Chinese do not understand the significance of modern warfare and that they are reckless and inclined to throw the world into a general war. Even Khrushchev, at the Moscow Conference of Eighty-one Communist Parties in November and December of 1960, was reported to have told the Chinese that they knew nothing about modern war. Reportedly, the Russians begged the Chinese to stop using such expressions as "the atom bomb is a paper tiger."<sup>25</sup> More recently, in response to Chinese accusations of Russian appeasement with respect to the Cuban crisis and to Peking's continued use of the "paper tiger" theme, Khrushchev on December 12, 1962, reminded the Chinese that if imperialism is a "'paper tiger,' now, those who say this know that this 'paper tiger' has atomic teeth."<sup>26</sup> The Chinese, in turn, on December 15 insisted that the concept of "imperialists and all reactionaries being paper tigers" was a Marxist-Leninist concept and that nuclear

---

<sup>24</sup> N. Talenskii, "On the Character of Modern Warfare," International Affairs (Moscow), October 1960.

<sup>25</sup> The Observer, London, February 12, 1961.

<sup>26</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, report to USSR Supreme Soviet, December 12, 1962, in The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XIV, No. 52, January 28, 1963, p. 3.

weapons could not decide the destiny of mankind.<sup>27</sup> Two weeks later in response to Togliatti's charges at the 10th congress of the Italian Communist Party that the Chinese Communist Party underestimated the destructiveness of nuclear weapons and wanted to drag the world into a nuclear war, a slight shift occurred in the Chinese public position on nuclear weapons when Jen-min Jih-pao conceded that the "Chinese Communist Party has consistently held that nuclear weapons have unprecedented destructive power and that it would be an unprecedented calamity for mankind if nuclear war should break out." The Chinese, however, continued to insist that nuclear war "would result in the extinction of imperialism and definitely not in the extinction of mankind" and that under "no circumstances must Communists act as voluntary propagandists for the U.S. imperialist policy of nuclear blackmail."<sup>28</sup>

Whatever the actual motivation underlying charges and countercharges of this nature, there is considerable evidence, as demonstrated in China's military doctrine on nuclear war, her assessment of the threat, her military caution, and her views on deterrence, to support the thesis that the Chinese do understand the significance of nuclear warfare and are not inclined to be reckless.

---

<sup>27</sup> JMJP editorial, "Workers of All Countries Unite to Oppose Our Common Enemy," December 15, 1962.

<sup>28</sup> JMJP editorial, "The Differences between Comrade Togliatti and Us," December 31, 1962.

Military Doctrine and Nuclear War<sup>29</sup>

In mid-1955, certain Chinese military leaders openly discussed the implications of nuclear weapons for modern military operations and strategic concepts. They recognized that the emergence of nuclear weapons was a new development in military science and expressed concern about the possibility of a "sudden attack." Later statements admitted the full destructiveness of nuclear weapons. In October 1957, Chinese Communist Air Force doctrine defined the military threat as that of destruction of military areas, industrial complexes, and communication centers by surprise attack from the air. It emphasized the immediate need for a combat-ready air defense system, and pointed to the need to destroy the enemy in the air before vital centers could be destroyed.<sup>30</sup> In thus admitting the vulnerability of China to attack, Communist Chinese military experts must also be aware that China's industrial complexes are concentrated in a few areas and her weapon production in a few plants.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, they must appreciate that the transportation system is limited principally to railroads, that despite a long coastline there are relatively few ports, that command and control are tightly held in Peking, and that among a large number of airfields only some can be used in air defense.

---

<sup>29</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this subject, see Alice Langley Hsieh, Communist China's Strategy in the Nuclear Era, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962.

<sup>30</sup> Fang-k'ung Chün (Air Defense Troops), ed. Chu Hsin, Yüan Liang, and Chou Len-shen, Peking, October 1957.

<sup>31</sup> In his "Can Communist China Afford War?" Orbis, Vol. VI, No. 3, Fall 1962, p. 456, Y. L. Wu refers to a

Assessment of the Threat. China's reappraisal of her vulnerability to nuclear warfare in the 1954-55 period can be attributed in part to her growing awareness of the enhancement of U.S. striking power in the Far East during that time. Since then, Chinese policies have shown considerable sensitivity to U.S. military developments and policies in the area. This was particularly evident in the reaction to the statement by then Secretary of State Dulles on March 8, 1955, in which he described U.S. sea and air forces in the area as "now equipped with new and powerful weapons of precision" and counted "atomic missiles" among conventional weapons. Chinese newspapers have commented on the reported assignment of missiles to Taiwan in 1957, the increase in U.S. military (including nuclear) capabilities during the 1958 Quemoy crisis, and more recently, the stationing of antiaircraft missiles in Taiwan and Japan, the proposed build-up of Polaris submarines in the U.S. Pacific Fleet, the reported presence of B-52's in the Far East theater, the rotation of jet fighter planes, U.S. maneuvers, as well as efforts to strengthen U.S. capabilities for low-level military operations in the area.

China's Military Caution. With the recognition of the destructiveness of nuclear weapons and of the implications of these weapons for modern warfare, caution has increasingly dominated Communist China's employment of

---

current study on industrial location and transportation in Communist China which he prepared for the Hoover Institution and which shows that there are at present no more than twenty-one large economic and industrial centers in Mainland China and some thirty secondary centers of consequence.

military force for offensive purposes.<sup>32</sup> In 1954-55, China's decision not to press the war in Indochina or to push the Taiwan crisis appeared to be based on a more realistic estimate of what conflict with a nuclear-armed United States might involve. In the 1958 Quemoy crisis, Chinese operations remained at a low level of violence. Apparently, Peking was anxious to minimize the risk of a direct clash with U.S. forces. Such evidence strongly suggests that the U.S. military posture in the Western Pacific has imposed important restraints on Chinese military actions that might result in a direct confrontation with the United States. This was indirectly admitted at the time of the 1962 Fukien build-up when NCNA pointed out that "it is only because they [the Chiang Kai-shek bandit troops] are shielded by U.S. imperialism that they are able to hold onto Taiwan and the other coastal islands."<sup>33</sup>

View of Deterrence. Chinese awareness of the implications of nuclear warfare must have brought home to them the real extent of their military dependence on the Soviet Union. Though the nature of the Soviet commitment to China

---

<sup>32</sup> China's intervention in the Korean War is often cited as evidence of incautious Chinese behavior. This view is subject to important reservations: (1) there is considerable evidence that the Chinese were very slow in identifying themselves with the North Korean cause in mid-1950, carefully assessing risks and gains; (2) the Chinese appear to be prepared to take greater risks in what they regard as "defensive" rather than "offensive" policies; and (3) at the time of their entry into the Korean War, it appeared that the Chinese had only an imperfect understanding of the meaning of nuclear weapons for modern warfare, and the role of nuclear weapons seems to have played only a minor part, if any, in their risk calculation.

<sup>33</sup> NCNA, Peking, June 23, 1962.

in the 1954-57 period remained unclear to them, China's leaders had no alternative but to rely on whatever nuclear deterrent the Soviet Union then possessed. At the time of the Soviet Union's ICBM and Sputnik successes in late 1957, the Chinese appear to have overestimated the gains that might be made as a result of Soviet military-technological developments. At the least, they exaggerated the impact of these developments on U.S. policies. Since then, the Chinese, while continuing to be cautious in their own military behavior, have attempted to persuade the Soviet Union to take a more aggressive stance toward the West, preferably in support of Chinese objectives. For example, at the time of the 1958 Quemoy crisis, the Chinese probably hoped to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that the United States would indeed prove to be a "paper tiger" when subjected even to minimum pressure and that consequently it was "safe" for the Soviets to back Chinese objectives. However, Peking's unwillingness to risk an independent confrontation of U.S. forces in the area indicated that China had been deterred from taking military actions directly involving U.S. interests in the area. To date, the Soviet Union on its part has apparently been unwilling to give the Chinese any advance commitment to support Chinese offensive operations.

In other words, Chinese practice -- caution and rationality in the use of military means and awareness of their dependence on the Soviet Union -- contrasts sharply with Chinese verbal bellicosity, continued public disparagement of the consequences of nuclear warfare, and persistence in describing the United States as a "paper

tiger" to be despised strategically. This paradox strongly suggests that the Chinese believe that any discussion of the consequences of nuclear war is demoralizing to the people of the socialist camp and plays into U.S. hands. Thus, these themes provide the Chinese with the means for bolstering internal morale. At the same time they serve to disguise China's present military weakness and assist the Chinese in pressing the Soviet Union to take a more aggressive stance internationally, particularly in support of Chinese objectives. These themes, moreover, underline the premium that Peking places on retaining an image of China as revolutionary in behavior. Perhaps more important, they indicate Peking's belief that American power in the area is transitory, and suggest that China is optimistic about achieving her major objectives in the long run.<sup>34</sup>

#### THE USES OF A NUCLEAR DETONATION

The foregoing suggests some of the general considerations that are likely to influence Communist China's

---

<sup>34</sup> The revived internal emphasis, since 1958, on the study of Mao's military writings, the "man-over-weapons" theme, and the condemnation of the purely "military viewpoint" supplement the externally oriented themes, insofar as they serve to strengthen Party leadership over the military, underline the primacy of the political element in China's policies, rationalize China's continued emphasis on conventional, low-level military preparations in the absence of a nuclear capability, and provide a flexible framework within which a variety of future contingencies can be explored.

exploitation of its nuclear development. In view of China's objectives and the primacy of the political factor in Chinese policies it can be anticipated that the Chinese will detonate an unsophisticated nuclear device at the earliest possible date rather than delay an above-ground and detectable detonation until secret underground testing has enabled them to develop an operational nuclear-weapons capability. The rewards to be achieved from the mere detonation of a nuclear device are likely to appear so great, and the differential between gains stemming from a nuclear detonation and those from a sudden, demonstrable, but limited, nuclear capability, are likely to seem relatively so small, that the Chinese will not want to postpone their exploitation campaign until a later stage of development.

Assuming that no major change in the political-military environment in the Far East will have occurred in the period prior to Peking's initial detonation of a nuclear device, the problem for the Chinese, despite an improving military posture, will continue to be that of finding appropriate means to pursue their political objectives in the Far East though remaining militarily inferior to the United States.

There are two basic ways in which the Chinese Communists could exploit a nuclear detonation: at the propaganda and political level, in order to achieve long-term political gains; and through the military manipulation of their technological advance as a deterrent to outside interference in local operations designed to achieve quick military-political advantages.

At the political-propaganda level a number of divergent and even superficially contradictory lines can be expected, designed to achieve varying objectives and tailored

to a number of audiences with different attitudes.<sup>35</sup> In order to enhance her prestige in Asia and the world, China can be expected to trumpet her nuclear detonation as a wholly indigenous effort. The basis for this line was laid in the Liu Ya-lou 1958 article and confirmed in the fall of 1961 when Chou En-lai was reported to have said that "China would develop them [nuclear weapons] herself with her own scientists, and had not asked for, nor was she receiving, any help from Russia."<sup>36</sup> The Chinese will probably also emphasize for more sophisticated audiences that the detonation of a device foreshadows a genuine, indigenous nuclear-weapons production capability, while attempting to leave the impression with less sophisticated audiences that China is already a major nuclear power. In any event Peking's propaganda is likely to attempt to blur the distinction between a detonation and a capability, and to attribute to the former many of the advantages of the latter.

A key element in Peking's propaganda calculations will be the opportunity to stress that China has become the first Asian nation to enter the "nuclear club." There will, of course, be silence concerning Japanese and Indian progress in the peaceful uses of atomic energy. A nuclear detonation

---

<sup>35</sup>

Analysis of Asian reaction to Peking's propaganda at the time of a detonation is beyond the scope of this paper. The effectiveness of Peking's line, as well as the weaknesses therein, are likely to depend on the sophistication of the audience involved, the contemporary image of China in Asia, the proximity of target countries to China's border, the domestic situation in target countries, and the extent to which educational measures have been taken in the pre-detonation period.

<sup>36</sup>

Field Marshal the Viscount Montgomery, "China on the Move," Sunday Times (London), October 15, 1961.

is likely to be described as a great scientific achievement, as reflecting the extent of China's economic and scientific progress since 1949, as a visible result of China's "great leap forward," as confirming the superiority of the Chinese road to industrialization and of China as a model for underdeveloped areas, and as another "new turning point" in the international situation.

China can be expected to use her nuclear detonation to forward Peking's claim to recognition as the sole voice of China in international organizations, particularly the United Nations, and also as a means of obtaining a political price for China's participation in disarmament negotiations.<sup>37</sup> She can also be expected to bring to bear the pressure of her "nuclear threat" in order to effect a "peaceful" but favorable solution to the Taiwan issue. The design would be to use her emerging military potential to foster differences between the Chinese Nationalists and the United States, between the Chinese Nationalists and the Taiwanese, and within the Chinese Nationalist elite itself.

As noted earlier, the degree to which the Chinese can hope to assert leadership in the Far East largely depends on the extent to which they can curtail U.S. access to the area. Thus another pay-off envisaged by the Chinese from their detonation of a nuclear device

---

<sup>37</sup>

For Communist China's attitude toward disarmament negotiations, see Alice Langley Hsieh, The Chinese Genie: Peking's Role in the Nuclear Test Ban Negotiations, The RAND Corporation, Paper P-2022, June 20, 1960, and Ciro E. Zoppo and Alice Langley Hsieh, The Accession of Other Nations to the Nuclear Test Ban, The RAND Corporation, RM-2730-ARPA, March 8, 1961.

will be the reinforcement of trends in Asia toward neutralism and accommodation with Peking, providing unfavorable Asian and American responses can be minimized. To strengthen neutralist trends and to cause U.S. allies to limit U.S. use of bases and facilities in the area, the Chinese are likely to exaggerate their nuclear threat, to deprecate the U.S. military position in the area, to exploit Asian fear of nuclear war, and to focus particular attention on Taiwan and the off-shore islands as a probable source of war.

Hoping that Asian fears of involvement in a nuclear war will foster a trend toward neutralism and accommodation with the mainland, Peking can be expected simultaneously to take measures designed to minimize unfavorable Asian and American reaction to China's nuclear detonation. For example, Peking will probably seek to justify its testing by attempting to shift the onus for its detonation of a nuclear device to the other side. Following the pattern adopted by the Soviets when they announced their resumption of nuclear testing on August 30, 1961, Peking is likely to attribute its development of nuclear weapons to the "pressure of the international situation created by the imperialist United States." The pattern is already set in the constant dissemination of an aggressive and warlike image of the United States -- an image that is likely to be intensified in the weeks or months prior to a detonation. Or China will insist, consistent with statements already made by Chou En-lai and Chen Yi, that since other great nations have nuclear weapons, China must have them too. Or the Chinese might

take the line adopted by Jen-min Jih-pao in commenting on the "Tokyo Declaration" of the Eighth World Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs and for the Prevention of Nuclear War, which met in Tokyo in August of 1962, that nuclear weapons in the hands of socialist countries and nuclear tests conducted by them are "entirely different in nature from nuclear weapons in the hands of the imperialist bloc and nuclear tests conducted by that bloc."<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, it is likely that China will argue that the United States has consistently ignored China's proposal for the establishment of a zone of peace in the Far East and Pacific, including a zone free of nuclear weapons; that the United States is responsible for the failure to reach any agreement on the suspension of nuclear weapons testing or on the banning of nuclear weapons.<sup>39</sup> Peking can be expected to reiterate its willingness to participate in disarmament negotiations, as a means of exacting political concessions from the United States, but will undoubtedly insist that China has every right to test and produce her own nuclear weapons unless (1) international agreement is reached on general disarmament,<sup>40</sup> or (2) an agreement is

---

<sup>38</sup> JMJP editorial, August 19, 1962.

<sup>39</sup> According to JMJP, December 22, 1961, "We hold that if the United States is not willing to reach agreement on the banning of nuclear weapons, then all peace-loving countries are naturally entitled to conduct nuclear tests, manufacture nuclear weapons in order to safeguard their own security and put a further check on U.S. imperialism's threat to unleash a nuclear war."

<sup>40</sup> In his interview with Japanese correspondents in September 1962, Chen Yi took the position that the U.S.,

reached creating a zone in the Far East and Pacific free from weapons of mass destruction.

Regarding this latter point, it is possible that Peking, with a view to channeling any Asian resentment at Chinese nuclear testing in a direction favorable to Peking, may renew proposals at the propaganda level for the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in the Far East and Pacific. This possibility cannot be dismissed simply on the ground that it is obviously inconsistent with an overt Chinese testing program. Support for the concept of an Asian nuclear-free zone has appeared sporadically in Chinese statements since early 1958 (despite China's declared intention to make her own nuclear weapons), but principally in the context of propaganda toward Japan. Support for the concept was reiterated as late as December

---

USSR, France, and the United Kingdom were attempting to monopolize the possession of nuclear weapons. He also suggested that the test ban was designed to limit the spread of nuclear weapons to other powers. For this reason, he insisted that the only solution to the problem of nuclear weapons was not the suspension of nuclear weapons testing but the destruction of all existing nuclear weapons -- a position reaffirming a number of earlier statements in which a nuclear test cessation was generally made dependent on the banning of nuclear weapons. According to Jen-min Jih-pao, December 31, 1962: "We maintain that in the circumstance where the socialist camp possesses great nuclear superiority; in the circumstance where the struggle of the people of all countries against nuclear weapons and nuclear war has further broadened and deepened; in the circumstance where imperialism has further lost its nuclear superiority, has been compelled to recognize that its nuclear blackmail policy can function no longer and that if it starts a nuclear war it will only hasten its own extinction; total prohibition of nuclear weapons is possible."

31, 1962, in the context of Peking's reply to the Togliatti charges.

While in no way prepared to accept an Asian nuclear-free zone, unless perhaps all her other objectives in the area were realized, China may well continue to advance the concept on an undefined and ambiguous basis. Or, in line with what Chou En-lai told Edgar Snow in the fall of 1960, she might demand American recognition and removal of American forces from the Taiwan area as prerequisites for negotiations leading to such a zone.<sup>41</sup> Or she may prefer to let other Asian countries or the Soviet Union press this idea in the belief that concessions would be offered to her in order to secure her acquiescence.

In any event, by paying lip service to the concept of a nuclear-free zone, Peking may well hope to leave the impression that despite its nuclear testing it is still prepared to accept such an arrangement, provided that the United States is willing to recognize China's legitimate interests and that no other Asian power attempts to develop nuclear weapons. Thus a Chinese renewal of the proposal, even at the time of a detonation, would be expected to operate as a useful propaganda device for mobilizing Asian sentiment, a good part of it already ultra-sensitive to nuclear weapons, in favor of a position that would both inhibit any effective local reaction to the detonation and intensify pressures for restrictions on U.S. military policies in the area.

---

<sup>41</sup> Edgar Snow, "Red China's Leaders Talk Peace -- On Their Terms," Look, January 31, 1961.

Peking will also probably exploit its technological advance in order to step up its influence among the Asian Communist parties. It may well hope to use its emerging military power to increase their domestic political influence, and to stimulate national liberation movements according to the Chinese pattern.

China may also hope to increase her bargaining power with the Soviet Union or to use her enhanced position in the international Communist movement to exert indirect pressure on Moscow. While much depends on the status of the Sino-Soviet relationship at the time, the way in which the Chinese may seek to exploit the detonation and the political gains they may hope to achieve thereby could well have the effect of further exacerbating relations between Moscow and Peking.

Instead of pursuing primarily political measures designed over a period of time to achieve its objectives in the area, it is conceivable that the Chinese may opt for what they hope will be quick gains through local conventional operations behind the shield of their incipient deterrent capability. In this way, China would hope to use its nuclear threat to enhance the role of its conventional forces in the area.

However, such precipitate and premature military actions are unlikely. The Chinese will be aware that the mere detonation of a nuclear device is not sufficient to deceive the United States, and will not expect the latter to be ignorant of the true state of China's weapons development. Nor will the Chinese, unless the United States has suffered severe losses in the area, be likely to consider the detonation of a device the appropriate setting

for another testing of American intentions in the Taiwan area. They will hardly wish to bring on a duplication of the 1958 Quemoy fiasco. Moreover, the Chinese will not want to prejudice gains at the political level by arousing suspicion and fear concerning their military policies. Rather it can be expected that the Chinese will assign priority to the propaganda and political uses of a nuclear detonation. It is not impossible, however, that cold war successes might lead the Chinese to believe that it was safe to pursue low-level military actions. China has been and still is ready to engage in such activities as border warfare (as in the case of India) and the provision of assistance to external Communist movements when risks are low and potential gains high. Situations vulnerable to this kind of Chinese exploitation will continue to exist whether or not China detonates a nuclear device, whether or not she possesses a nuclear capability. If undertaken, however, Chinese military actions would probably not directly affect American interests in the area, or would be clandestine and ambiguous enough to make it difficult for the United States to respond.

More important, however, than a nuclear detonation in affecting China's future behavior will be her acquisition of nuclear weapons and the means for their delivery.

#### THE USES OF A MODEST NUCLEAR CAPABILITY

If it is assumed that the Chinese are able to develop a modest stockpile of nuclear weapons and a limited delivery capability (aircraft and perhaps a medium-range surface-to-surface missile) in the next decade, to what use might

they put this capability?<sup>42</sup> Among the options open to her at that time would be: (1) the direct use of nuclear weapons against U.S. bases and Asian countries; (2) the use of nuclear weapons as an umbrella for overt non-nuclear military operations and support of insurgency; (3) the political and propaganda exploitation of a nuclear capability.

#### Chinese Risk Calculations

In addition to the factors mentioned earlier, that is, the nature of her objectives and the caution and rationality that characterize her military doctrine, China's preference for one or more of these options will be strongly influenced by her contemporary assessment of: (1) the role of the Soviet Union; (2) the Chinese-U.S. military balance; and (3) the opportunities for low-risk gains in line with Chinese long-term goals.

#### Estimate of Soviet Support

China's caution in the past has in part been a function of her military dependence on the Soviet Union. The possession of a modest nuclear delivery capability, one that falls far short of parity with either the U.S. or USSR, will not in the final analysis free Peking from dependency on Moscow. For this reason the Chinese will

---

<sup>42</sup>This paper does not consider the possible uses of a Chinese strategic nuclear capability because of the unlikelihood of China's acquiring one within a reasonable time.

have little alternative but to continue to evaluate the character and scope of Soviet assistance, both political and military, that they might anticipate, and the political price that might be attached. In this evaluation the Chinese will be compelled to take into consideration such factors as the nature of Soviet objectives, past Soviet behavior in support of the Chinese, and the contemporary status of Sino-Soviet relations.

The Chinese are aware that Moscow's prime objectives are self-preservation and the economic development of the Soviet Union. Nor do they fail to recognize that Moscow, while it has a real interest in seeing the reduction of U.S. influence and power in the Far East, is more concerned about Europe. In view of these objectives, Moscow, unless it possesses overwhelming military superiority over the United States, is unlikely to take major risks in support of Peking's goals, risks that might involve it in a general war with the United States not of its own choosing or timing.

Peking has only to look to the recent past to confirm this evaluation of Soviet behavior. While the Soviet Union prior to mid-1960 may have provided limited types of scientific and technological assistance to Peking's program for the development of nuclear weapons, it appears to have been unwilling to provide the Chinese with nuclear weapons or with a strategic delivery capability. Though Moscow may have been willing to station nuclear weapons and missiles on Chinese territory under Soviet control, there is no indication that any such agreement was reached or even considered. Moreover, the Soviets since early 1958

have appeared to favor an alternate strategy to Peking's nuclear development -- that of a nuclear-free zone in the Far East.<sup>43</sup> In sum, there is little evidence to indicate that the Soviet Union will welcome China's emergence as a nuclear power.

Nor has Moscow shown any willingness to give Peking an advance commitment in support of Chinese objectives or to intervene overtly in the course of a crisis situation. At the time of the 1958 Quemoy crisis, Khrushchev's statement that "an attack on the People's Republic of China... is an attack on the Soviet Union" came only after the risks of Soviet involvement had been much reduced. Similarly, the Khrushchev warning in July 1962 (following the Chinese military build-up in Fukien) that "anyone who dares to attack the People's Republic of China will meet a crushing rebuff from the great Chinese people, the peoples of the Soviet Union and the whole Socialist camp"<sup>44</sup> was made only after President Kennedy's statement that U.S. purposes in the area were "peaceful and defensive."<sup>45</sup> Thus, it would appear that the Soviet commitment to China is neither automatic nor predetermined; rather Soviet actions will depend on Moscow's evaluation of the

---

<sup>43</sup> See A. L. Hsieh, Communist China's Strategy, pp. 96-109; The Chinese Genie: Peking's Role in the Nuclear Test Ban Negotiations, The RAND Corporation, Paper P-2022, June 20, 1960.

<sup>44</sup> New York Times, July 3, 1962.

<sup>45</sup> New York Times, June 28, 1962.

actual situation, of the risks involved, and of U.S.  
<sup>46</sup> intentions.

While any extended discussion of the Sino-Soviet conflict<sup>47</sup> is well beyond the scope of this paper, it would seem that relations between Peking and Moscow will continue, at best, in a state of shifting rivalry and cooperation. In particular, the priority accorded to self-interest in Soviet foreign policy would appear to preclude any establishment of completely harmonious relations between Moscow and Peking.

Consequently there is good reason for China, when she possesses a modest nuclear delivery capability, to continue to be conservative in evaluating the degree of assistance and support she can expect from the Soviet Union in the event of a military conflict with the United States. This does not mean that Peking will not attempt to manipulate the Soviet reaction, to calculate what risks can be taken independent of Soviet support with the hope of compelling Soviet involvement, or to see what advantage might be taken of tensions in U.S.-Soviet relations. It means that Chinese maneuverability will be limited and decisions as to the employment of Soviet military power will remain in Moscow, not Peking.

---

<sup>46</sup> For a more detailed examination of the nature of the Soviet commitment to China as expressed in Khrushchev's September 7, 1958, and October 5, 1958, statements, see A. L. Hsieh, Communist China's Strategy, pp. 128-129.

<sup>47</sup> See Donald S. Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1962.

Evaluation of the Chinese-U.S. Military Balance

As noted earlier, the Chinese have continually analyzed their military capabilities in relation to the U.S. force posture in the area. From 1954 on, such analyses seem to have contributed to a recognition that, lacking Soviet support, China was deterred from military operations that would be likely to elicit a U.S. response. The Chinese, however, have not been reluctant to test the credibility of U.S. political intentions, as demonstrated in their restrained use of force in the 1958 Quemoy crisis. It may be expected that when China possesses a modest nuclear delivery capability she will continue to make such military analyses and assessments of the U.S. political mood and will base her actions on an evaluation of the risks involved.

Assuming that the Soviet Union remains reluctant to support Chinese objectives and that the United States takes appropriate measures to maintain its military superiority in the Western Pacific, tailoring its military capabilities to meet emerging Chinese military developments, and leaves no doubt as to the credibility of its political intentions in the Far East, it would appear that the Chinese would be faced with considerable risks if they were to choose to use their nuclear capability overtly. For example, the Chinese could anticipate that any nuclear strike against U.S. bases or allies in the area would simply invite a U.S. nuclear retaliatory strike against the China mainland. The Chinese no doubt realize that such a retaliatory strike could inflict substantial damage on military targets, leaving them in no position

to mount a second strike. It could also leave their industrial and other centers vulnerable to further attacks. In view of past Chinese behavior, recognition of China's vulnerability to nuclear attack, and the vast destruction that could be inflicted on both military and economic targets, the Chinese are not likely to consider such risks acceptable.

Furthermore, Chinese initiation of the use of nuclear weapons in the course of a conventional conflict, for example in the Taiwan area, would raise the possibility of a U.S. reply in kind and of the ultimate U.S. sanction of a nuclear retaliatory strike against the mainland. Similarly, a Chinese use of nuclear weapons as an umbrella for overt non-nuclear operations against areas of direct interest to the United States raises the possibility of an escalation of the conflict to the nuclear level, again with the ultimate U.S. sanction available.

Consequently it would appear that so long as China is not certain of Soviet military support for her objectives, either directly or by deterrence of U.S. responses, and is confronted with a U.S. determination and capability to make the risks of overt military operations extremely high, she is not likely to opt for a course of action that might bring her into direct and large-scale conflict with U.S. forces in the area.

#### Opportunities for Low-risk Gains

Rather, China's policies are likely to be guided principally by the degree to which opportunities exist or can be created for low-risk gains, either through

political or through low-level military activities. Such opportunities might arise from ambiguities in U.S. commitments in the area, indecisiveness in the U.S. reaction to crisis situations, vulnerabilities among U.S. allies, or instability within countries on China's periphery. These opportunities would allow Peking to emphasize the political-propaganda use of her nuclear capability. Such a course would be in accord with past Chinese doctrine on the use of force which, in addition to military rationality and caution, stresses the importance of political-propaganda techniques, particularly when one is confronted with a militarily stronger opponent. Moreover, in view of extreme Asian sensitivity to nuclear weapons, such political-propaganda exploitation may well be considered by Peking as providing a greater likelihood of success. If effective, such exploitation could in turn create increased opportunities for low-level military probes at reduced risk.

#### Political-Propaganda Targets and China's Expectations

There is not likely to be any clean break between China's political exploitation of her first nuclear detonation and of an operational nuclear capability. However, Peking is likely to view its progressive acquisition of a nuclear capability as the means of achieving gains of a more direct military-political nature, in particular, those that would reduce U.S. power and influence in the area. Priority targets are thus likely to include the U.S.-Asian alliance and base system, the

self-defense effort of Asian nations, and internal stability in the area.

Peking is likely to believe that U.S. allies in the area, when confronted with a nuclear-armed China, will be more inclined to question the military credibility of the U.S. deterrent in Asia. Peking will expect U.S. allies to become concerned that their hosting of U.S. bases may increase the possibility of their involvement in a nuclear conflict with Peking. China will hope that this concern will generate indigenous pressures for a reappraisal of foreign policy alignments and military alliances and result in the imposition of restrictions on U.S. use of bases and facilities in the event of conflict with Peking, particularly over such issues as the off-shore islands and Taiwan. China would further expect pressures on the United States for self-imposed limits on its military policies in the Far East, and demands for the United States to "come to terms" with Peking.

Peking is also likely to expect that it will be able, by casting doubt on the firmness of U.S. military and political policies in the area, to discourage any effective self-defense efforts on the part of free Asian nations. Peking will particularly hope to discourage Asian nations that might be capable of developing their own nuclear weapons, such as India and Japan, from making the political decision to do so.

Peking may also expect an exacerbation of political friction within free Asian nations because of China's nuclear progress, particularly as regards the nature of an appropriate response to the Chinese achievement.

Growing friction within countries allied with the United States, when as in the case of Japan it is combined with internal pressures to expand trade with China, restore diplomatic relations with the mainland regime, or come to an accommodation with Peking, would be expected to lead to a polarization of political sentiment. In the case of Asian neutrals, Peking may hope that increasing political instability will create opportunities for increased pressures from Peking.

China may also expect that, in the event of Communist-inspired "national liberation" movements in neighboring countries, her nuclear capability will intimidate local governments, inhibit their responses to local Communist activities, and delay requests for U.S. assistance for fear of antagonizing a nuclear-armed China.

#### Techniques

Thus, China is likely to believe that the actual possession of an operational nuclear capability, such as that suggested earlier in this paper, as distinguished from the detonation of a device, is likely to provide her with qualitatively more effective political-propaganda techniques for achieving her long-term goals. Among such techniques will be a stepping up of the depreciation of the U.S. military position in the Far East with a view to undermining free Asian confidence in U.S. military capabilities in the area. Peking may well attempt to reinforce the contention that its possession of nuclear weapons has brought about a decisive shift in the balance of forces in the Far East, claiming that her nuclear

capability cancels out the U.S. nuclear deterrent in the area and that her conventional forces are clearly superior to those of the United States and its allies in Asia. In the light of this alleged superiority, Peking can be expected to portray the United States as incapable of defending its allies in Asia, as restrained from using nuclear weapons -- in short, as deterred from engaging in either nuclear or non-nuclear conflict in the area.

In order to exploit Asian fear of involvement in a nuclear war, and to generate pressures for restricting U.S. access to the area, Peking is likely to emphasize the intensification of the danger of war, particularly the possibility of U.S. miscalculation, of a U.S. use of nuclear weapons in desperation, and of war begun by accident or unauthorized action. Fear of a nuclear war will be used to reinforce the unpopularity of the Taiwan issue among Asian neutrals and to generate dissatisfaction with U.S. China policy among U.S. allies with a view to making U.S. support of Taiwan more difficult and of encouraging the United States to settle the problem on Peking's terms.

Through such techniques as nuclear threats and blackmail, Peking may hope to gain advantages from her nuclear capability without incurring the risks of direct action. She probably will prefer generalized threats to specific threats. In the course of a crisis situation, a specific warning that U.S. intervention might bring nuclear war to an Asian third country, or threats designed to intimidate a local government, would leave the Chinese bluff open to challenge. Peking is more likely to

declare, as did the Soviet Union, that those countries containing U.S. bases are hostages for U.S. behavior and that such bases expose the host country to the danger of destruction in the event of a nuclear conflict in Asia. She can also be expected to assert that were a nuclear exchange to take place U.S. allies would be vulnerable to complete annihilation while China, with her large population, vast territory, and allegedly decentralized industry, could survive a nuclear attack -- in other words, that China could afford a nuclear war while U.S. allies couldn't. Taiwan and Japan are likely to be major targets for Chinese nuclear threats, perhaps accompanied by blandishments. Nuclear blackmail may also be used by Peking to make favorable border adjustments or to increase its influence in buffer areas.

A major problem for the Chinese will be that of persuading the United States and Asian countries to accept the alleged Chinese capability and of giving an impression of confidence in their own military posture. Accordingly, nuclear threats on the part of the Chinese are likely to be backed up by a major effort aimed at conveying an impression of great military strength. Assertions by military and political leaders of China's military claims can be expected to be underlined by the concerted use of displays and demonstrations of military equipment, as well as by giving wide publicity to any reorganization of, or new training in, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) that would indicate its adaptation to a nuclear conflict (for example, the establishment of a rocket command within the PLA), or by stressing any measures, such as civil

defense, that would tend to demonstrate China's reduced vulnerability to attack. Propaganda claims of military strength may well be in greater volume than in the Soviet case during a comparable period and may be handled in such a way as to preclude any adequate assessment of true capabilities, thus leading to misinterpretation, particularly among Asian countries, and a willingness to accept Chinese claims.

To create an environment that would underline the credibility of their nuclear posture without creating such resentment and suspicion as to prejudice political gains, the Chinese are likely to project an image of themselves as both revolutionary and conciliatory in behavior. On the one hand, they are likely to press for their revolutionary objectives, giving renewed emphasis to the charge that the United States is a "paper tiger," but now -- because of China's nuclear capability -- one that should be despised both strategically and tactically. They will probably continue to assert that they are not afraid of a nuclear war. On the other hand, however, at the same time as she shows her "nuclear flag," China is likely to continue to insist that disarmament measures are necessary and possible, that steps should be taken toward the creation of an Asian nuclear-free zone, and that a nuclear war would be a calamity, but one that can be avoided provided "the United States pursues less aggressive, provocative policies," if U.S. bases and influence are removed from the area, and if the United States moves toward settling outstanding issues with Peking. In other words, the Chinese will want to leave

the impression with Asian and other audiences that the United States is the threat to peace in Asia and that a rapprochement with Peking is possible and preferable to a direct military confrontation.

Low-level Chinese Military Actions. As noted earlier, situations vulnerable to low-level military action will continue to exist whether China possesses a nuclear capability or not.

When she possesses a nuclear capability, however, China may believe that the opportunities for low-level military actions have much increased. She may reason that possession of a nuclear capability will deter resistance to Chinese moves and will lead to pressures against U.S. intervention or the imposition of restrictions on the American use of bases and facilities in the area, thus keeping the risks of such actions within acceptable limits. She may believe that the political-propaganda exploitation of her nuclear capability has been effective enough to warrant an accelerated drive toward achievement of her long-term objectives.

Consequently, at the same time as she possesses a nuclear capability, China may: (1) be more prone to provide overt or covert support to local Communist uprisings and insurgent movements directed against pro-Western and neutral nationalist governments in the area; (2) consider the time appropriate to test U.S. and free Asian responses in such areas as Taiwan and the off-shore islands with a view to exploiting the situation both militarily and politically; and (3) be even more willing to make overt use of her military power to compel the settlement of border problems on her terms.

China may undertake such actions with the expectation that even limited successes will enhance her position in Asia and add further weight to her political-propaganda efforts. However, Peking is not likely to be insensitive to U.S. or Asian reaction to selective military probing, or remiss in assessing the longer term political costs of local military successes. In any event, Peking can be expected to attempt to retain the ability to keep the operation at the desired level or to terminate it quickly if political or military factors so dictate.

Earlier in this paper a question was raised about the advantages accruing to the Chinese as a result of their developing a modest nuclear capability. Provided that caution and rationality continue to characterize Chinese military behavior, that the Soviet Union remains reluctant to give military support to Chinese objectives, and that the United States retains the determination and capability to make the risks of overt Chinese military operations in the area extremely high, the Chinese are likely to find that the advantages of possessing a modest nuclear capability lie in its political-propaganda use and as a backup for low-level military operations.

A conclusion of this nature, however, does not minimize the challenge that Communist China will pose to the United States and the free countries of Asia (or to the Soviet Union) as she progressively moves toward the acquisition of a nuclear capability. In fact, it poses a challenge which will be all the more difficult to meet. Because the challenge will not be a clear-cut military one, responses to it may not be adequate and

hence may increase China's ability to make gains with little risk. In turn, Chinese political or low-level military successes in the context of increasing strength and capabilities could make future military responses all the more difficult. In sum, there is little reason to underestimate the possibilities open to the Chinese in the political, low-risk use of their inferior military forces, nuclear and otherwise.